Galina Lomovtseva

Moscow State University Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies Department of Linguistics and Information Technologies

Education in Britain and in Russia

Advantages and Disadvantages – a personal view

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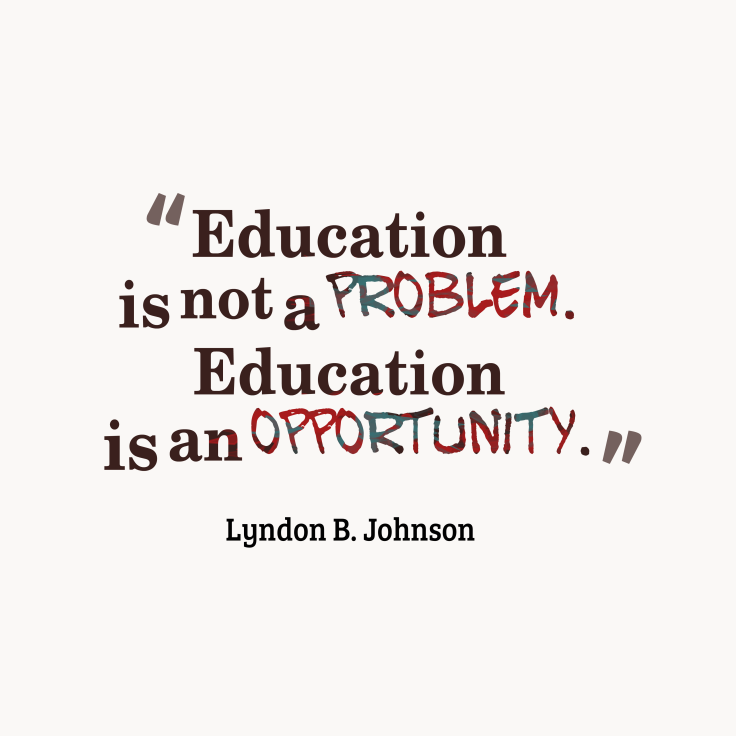
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# Indication of better life



A well-educated and well-trained population is essential for a country's social and economic well-being. A key role of education consists of providing individuals with knowledge, different competences and skills. It gives us an opportunity for effective participation in society and economy, e.g. finding a good job and earning enough money.

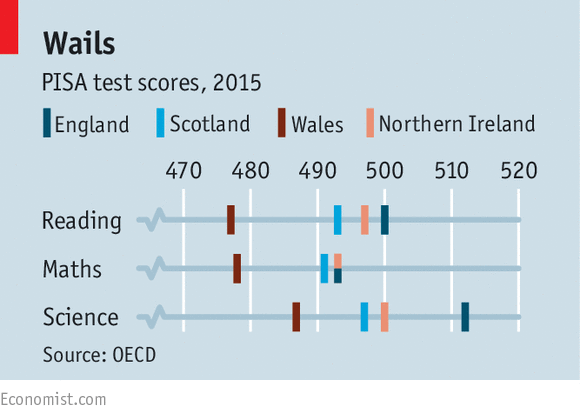
According to the statistics of Better Life Index for the 2015 we can see that Russians usually study less years than British and have lower scores in subjects, but the number of adults have completed upper secondary education is more by 15% compared with people in the United Kingdom [1].

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| **Indicator** | **Russian Federation** | **United Kingdom** | **OECD\* average** |
| Years of education between the ages of 5 and 39 | 16,1 | 16,7 | 17,5 |
| PISA\*\* Test Scores in reading literacy, maths, sciences | 481 | 503\*\*\* | 497 |
| Adults aged 25-64 completed upper-secondary education | 95% | 79% | 76% |

\*OESD - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

\*\*PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment

\*\*\*The diagram below shows the variety of scores in the United Kingdom (although Russian scores lower than English, but they’re the same as Welsh)



What do these figures tell us? We can make a suggestion that quality of education and as a result a quality of life in Great Britain is higher than in Russia. But what is the difference between these two educational systems that determine the wellbeing of their countries? Which system is better? Let’s figure it out!

# Education in Great Britain

The basic features of the British educational system are the same as they are anywhere else in Europe: the full-time education is compulsory up to the middle teenage years; the academic year begins at the end of summer; compulsory education is free of charge, but parents may spend money on educating their children privately if they want to. Why does the world love a British education? The answer is - **academic quality**.

Hilary Moriarty, national director of the U.K.’s Boarding Schools’ Association, has no doubt of the reason for the continued popularity of British schools. “It is for the grades,” she says. “They want the best education you can get.” [2]

British education has already become an international brand in itself. It’s also highly prized and is seen as trustworthy. Parents who want their children to have a **rounded education** choose British schools because of the range of extra-curricular activities.

“People are choosing to come here because we have a distinctive global mix of students and an international education program,” says Katy Ricks, head of Sevenoaks School (founded 1432) in Kent.

“Our parents are thinking their child will work in a global, multi-lingual workplace and they want a genuine international network of friends,” she adds. “In the old days people wanted the stamp of a British public school education, whereas now they want their children to be equipped to work with anyone around the world.”

Perhaps the main reason of popularity is that British schools provide **easier access to leading universities**. British qualifications are acceptable not only in the U.K. but in the U.S. as well (e.g. in Yale and Harward). “They are a currency and you can trade them across the world”, says Moriarty.

Among special benefits are emphasized the long history of providing education (at such ancient universities as Oxford and Cambridge), a good range of institutions, independent verification and accreditation of education system, more attention to the individual work as well as team work, and strong academic qualification [3].

The British traditionally give a high value to learning for its own sake rather than for any particular purposes, they also give more **attention to the quality of person** that education produces than to the qualities of abilities. A relatively large amount of attention is given to the arts and humanities (which develop the well-rounded human being), and relatively little to science and technology (which develop the ability to do specific jobs).Teachers give priority to developing understanding rather than acquiring factual knowledge and learning to apply this knowledge to specific tasks. Sport is very popular in British schools and universities because it helps to **develop the “compete” person**. Much of the public debate about educational policy still focuses not so much on how to help people develop useful knowledge and skills as on how education might help to bring about a better society – on social justice rather than on efficiency [4].

The other main characteristic of the British system is that there is comparatively **little central control or uniformity**. Education is managed not by one, but by three, separate government departments: the Department for Education and Employment is responsible for England and Wales alone – Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own departments. Central authorities only dictate and implement overall organization of educational system and set overall learning objectives up to the end of compulsory education.

## Advantages of British Schools

Extra-curricular activities (e.g. drama, school magazine, photography, music) play an important part in English school life. The most traditionally English of these clubs is the debating society in which students learn to develop their oral skills and to speak according to democratic rules [5].

The English concept of the school as a community combines formal learning with the acquisition of social values such as co-operation, loyalty, team spirit, readiness to help. This educational principle is exemplified with the help of the prefect system, out-of-class activities and community schemes. These aims were developed originally by the private schools and later adopted by state schools, too.

Example of extra-curricular activities schedule [6]:

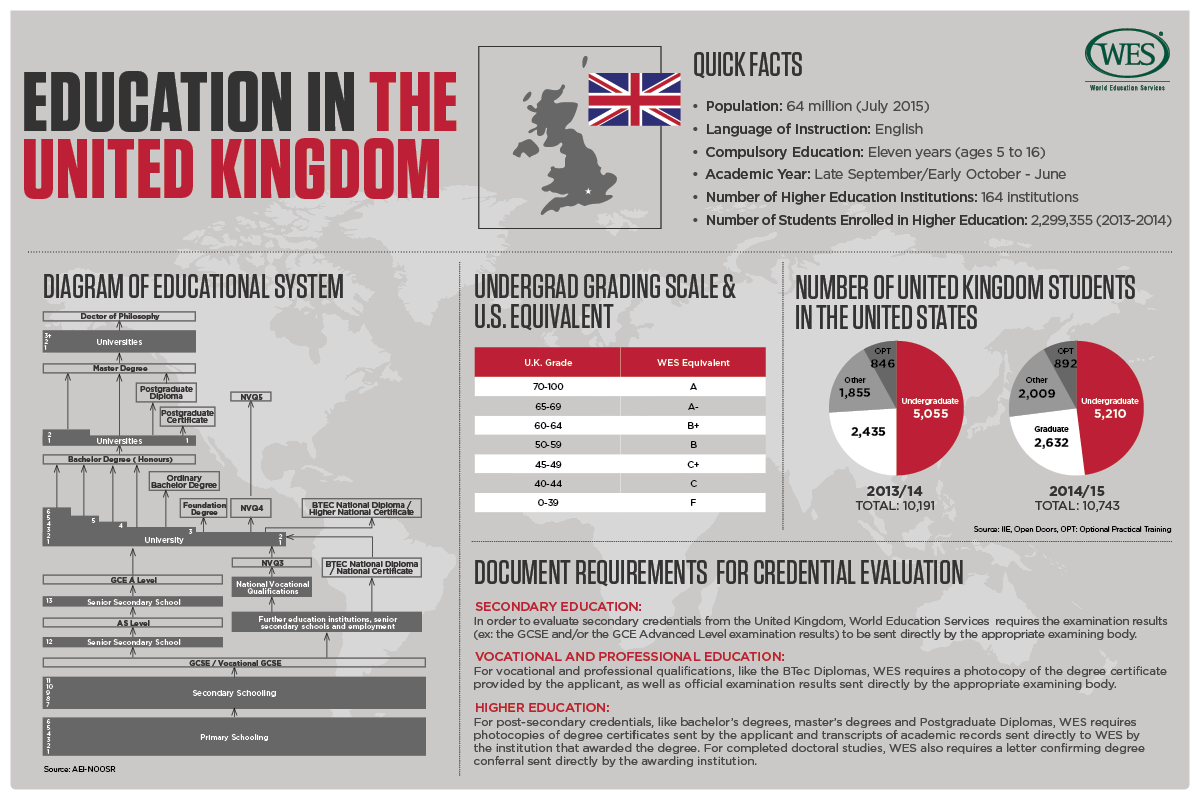


## Problems of British Schools

The basic problem of British education lies in the fact that there is no common, but a dual system of education, which sustains inequality [7]. The social importance of the private schools (consisting only 6% of all schools) results in the fact that more and more middle-class parents try to enroll their children at one of the Public Schools. Educational privilege, social prestige help the Public School leavers to achieve high positions in all fields of life. For this reason the efficiency of the Comprehensive Schools is mistrusted. The present educational system can’t provide the equal opportunities for all.

Another problem is that children are deprived of the childhood since they go to primary school at 5 and devote much time to education. I guess overloading curriculum and lots of homework led to introduction of happiness lessons in British schools that aimed to help children think positively and reduce the level of anxiety and depression.

New problems for the British education system arose through the existence of ethnic groups concentrated in special areas. The schools have been encouraged to take into account the ethnic and cultural background of their pupils.



# Education in Russia

The education system of the Russian Federation has undergone significant change since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. During Soviet times, education was highly centralized and state ideology was a major component of the national curriculum. Through the 1990s, educational reform programs have concentrated on eliminating political ideology and moral education from the curriculum so that the learning process is more attuned to the needs of a market-driven economy [8].

Professional disciplines such as management, law, economics, business, computer technologies and accounting have been given more attention. Additionally, teaching methods have become more student-centered in comparison with a Soviet-Style pedagogical methodology based on rote learning. Due to the Law on Education in 1992 the state control from educational policy was removed and schools become more attuned to the needs of the regions and nationalities.

The document “Concept of the Modernization of the Russian Education for the prior until 2010” gave a plan for all experiments, innovation and education reforms such as developing of state standards for basic and secondary education, including federal instructions about minimum curriculum requirements. Preference has been given to promoting the teaching of foreign languages, economics, and information and communication technologies. An effort was made again to solve main problems of Russian educational system: low salaries, poor and outdated facilities and teaching materials, and inadequate regulatory mechanisms.

School education in the Russian Federation has a 4+5+2 format, including four years of primary school, five years of lower secondary school and two years of upper secondary school. There are three types of public schools – Schools, Lyceums (specialize in Maths and Sciences) and Gymnasiums (specialize in Humanities and Languages). Regular schools teach the basic courses, but may also offer specialties such as Arts and Physical Education. Universities, polytechnic institutions, academies and vocational colleges are responsible for higher education.

## Integration of Russian Federation into Bologna Process

Russia joined the Bologna Process in September 2003. The Bologna Declaration determined the direction of the ongoing reforms of Russia’s educational system and its key objectives which include the following [9]:

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees. Russia moved to the two-cycle educational system. But introduction of such qualifications as “Bachelor” and “Master” caused certain problems for the Russia’s labor market. M.E. Pankratova and N.Yu. Rasheva write "Uncommon situation where the company refuses to take a specialist with a bachelor's degree or master's degree because the requirements for candidates is specialist degree. Often, in everyday life Bachelor perceived as a person with college education, half-taught as a specialist, which is far from the truth". Another problem is the devaluation of higher education when Bachelor, compared with a Specialist is educated close to the Secondary Special Education.

2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles: undergraduate and graduate studies. The Bachelor program curriculum contains up to 60% professional disciplines; that makes lots of difficulties for students who want to change their specialty or field of study at a graduate level. Ability of students to master the new material successfully at this level for short 2-years period of time remains a big question.

3. Establishment of a credit system (ECTS). Russian educational institutions don’t use the key components of ECTS which are individual-oriented system of organization of educational process and stimulating the score-rating system of educational activity of the student. As opposed to elected courses there is a scheduled system that doesn’t reflect the student’s involvement in the studying process because all graduates from a particular student group must earn the same number of ECTS credits and take the same set of courses.

4. Promotion of mobility. The mobility of students and faculty, which contributes to the quality and recognition of qualifications, is almost absent in the Russian educational system. Transferring from one university to another is highly formalized. In case of transferring to another university, the student has to take the course again if the course title or the course credit is different at another university. According to I.V.Vorobiova “the variability of educational programs, the lack of a standardized credit transfer system make academic mobility more difficult”. Moreover, the main obstacles for international engineering academic mobility in Russia are overall low level of second language proficiency, absence of wide international cooperation habits, rigid traditional system of higher education, etc.

5. Promotion of European co-operation in Quality Assurance (ENQA). In contrast to developed countries which ensure the quality of education by using decentralized mechanisms and procedures, in Russia uses the process of massification of higher education. Higher education itself began to be considered an evidence of a certain social status. Moreover, the dominance of the bureaucracy, burdensome mechanisms of quality assessment and accreditation, reliance on standards, quantitative methods, and sets of criteria still exist in our country.

6. Lifelong learning. Within the framework of national higher education, due to lack of legal basis for the individual accounting and accumulation of credits, students have no opportunity to accumulate credits throughout life and incorporate them in training. Therefore, all existing forms of supplementary education do not form a coherent interconnected system of «lifelong learning», they are quite fragmented and disparate elements.

As we can see Russia has significant difficulties in implementing the key objectives of the Bologna Agreement that are caused by the specifics and the realities of the national system of Higher Education.

## Advantages of Russia’s Higher Education

The Russian higher educational system include more than 650 state universities that offer a wide choice of medical, economic, engineering and humanities specialties (among them are prestigious universities with more than 100 years history and globally respected degrees such as Lomonosov Moscow State University and Saint-Petersburg State University). Russian Higher education is based on world-famous school of fundamental and applied science, especially strong in physics, mathematics and natural sciences. It’s is still free for most of the students, and is known as one of the best for quality and price combination that makes it affordable and attractive both for Russian and foreign students. Another benefit is a range of discounts for students, e.g. for visiting different public and entertainment facilities (libraries, museums, theatres), for traveling on public transport [10].

# Comparison of the two Educational Systems

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| Education Systems of Russia and Great Britain (Comparison) | |
| D:\Document\МГУ\The World of Britain\Personal Project\Education System (comparison).jpg | I’ve created a mind map that demonstrates the structure of the two educational systems.  Link: <https://mind42.com/mindmap/307e7518-99fc-478b-954d-e45dc066a6aa> |

The main difference between the Russian School System and the British one is the teaching approach [11, 12, 13, 14].

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| **Russian Schools** | **British Schools** |
| Russian traditional form of teaching based on the deductive approach that includes remembering large amount of information and its accurate reproduction. Russian educational system has inherited the best methods from the USSR school whose goal was a formation of well-educated generation for industry and economy of the country.  Didactic model of teaching assumes the dominant role of the teacher. Pupils have to follow the teacher’s instructions and learn new material that is explained to them. Teacher usually doesn’t encourage pupils to gain knowledge themselves but gives them ready-made portions of information which they have to remember. Pupils focus on getting the correct answer and knowing the facts. | British education aims to educate leaders in business, politics, sports, music and other spheres of life. These traditions have appeared since the 18th century when Britain had lots of colonies all over the world and needed the leaders to run the country.  Educational system of the UK based on the investigative approach when activity of students focused on the knowledge developing and its practical application. For this reason most of the school time is devoted to laboratory and practical works, debating clubs and work on creativity projects. Furthermore students study in groups while a teacher’s role includes offering advices and directing their search for solutions in the right direction. |
| Focus on the development of lower order three skills - knowledge, comprehension, and application. | Focus on the development of higher order thinking skills - analysis, synthesis and evaluation. |
| Russian educational program is optimized for average pupils with ordinary abilities. Those who have lower or higher abilities are not supported. | Differentiation of the educative process is the main principle of British system. Each of the students study according to their abilities and the speed of learning the material. |
| Russian curriculum can be represented in the form of inverted pyramid: at school children begin learning with an alphabet and mental arithmetic, but then the number of subjects increase greatly. With the advent of the Unified State Exam pupils have to define their future specialization from the secondary school. | British educational “pyramid” stands firmly on foot: from the first grade children study a wide range of school subjects moving through the specialization focused on only 3-4 subjects in the last grades. That helps to avoid problems of self-determination because students choose the direction of education from as early as 14 years old. |
| Students don’t take lessons solely, but they always stay in a class. Classes are composed at the beginning of 5th grade and have constant composition till the end of school. Substitution between parallel classes is rare. Pupils don’t have personal schedules and can’t choose subjects in accordance with the specialty. | Other characteristic of British school is different grade composition. For example in primary school pupils start studying in a new class (mixed from parallel ones) every year, high school students have mixed classes every lesson (because they are forms in view of chosen subjects). As a result social network of pupils expands and passes through a filter of common interests. |
| Russian schools also offer many after-school clubs and classes that are a cultural tradition dating back to the USSR with its well-developed system of extracurricular facilities for youth. | British schools are famous for extra-curricular activities including sports, arts, science and technology, which develop individuality and inner potential of children. The ability to succeed not in one but in several unrelated areas raises the students’ self-esteem as well as teaches them how to manage the time correctly. Physical exercises define spirit and teach to achieve their goals both in sports and in life. |
| Nowadays pupils have to wear a uniform at school. Each school can choose its own uniform - color and even emblem. There is no strict discipline and respect of adults (teachers) in Russian schools. | At school pupils become familiar with “school spirit” and strict discipline. “School spirit” is expressed in wearing a school uniform (with a special school emblem), taking part in all whole-school events, supporting honor and prestige of the school. Discipline and punctuality are valued no less then academic success. |

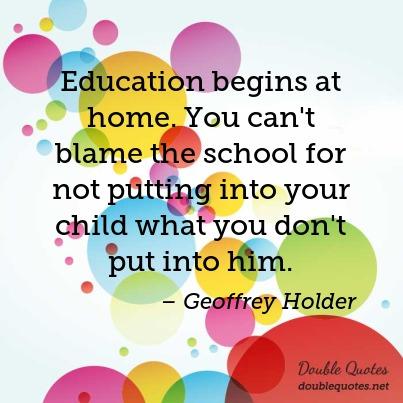
As for higher education we can compare both systems in terms of two grand Universities - Lomonosov Moscow State University of Russia and University of Oxford of the UK - which represent the best traditions of education of corresponding countries [15].

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| **MSU**  Картинки по запросу moscow state university | **Oxford**  Картинки по запросу oxford |
| A large number of non-core subjects such as ecology, sociology, political studies etc. mandatory for each specialty. Although studying different subjects broaden students’ mind, in reality these lectures are less attended and unpopular among the students. They also take up much of students’ time and extend the duration of studies at the university (5-6 years). | Schools are responsible for basic education and universities are responsible for core education. They understand the limitation of time and capability of students and give more attention to specialized knowledge. Bachelor’s Degree usually takes 3 years of education and Magistrate’s Degree - 4 years. |
| The average age of professors is high. Elderly professors lose touch with the younger generation. They take hardly changes in science and education. New educational subjects don’t appear. | There are lots of young members in Oxford. After reaching a certain age professors retire. Although they can consult students but they are suspended from reading lectures and administrative duties. Due to temporary (1-2 years) contracts with resent graduates Oxford always has young researchers who pursue science as well as teach study groups and sometimes read lectures. |
| Nontransparent selection of cadres. Vacancies are announced, but an applicant is decided in advance by rector. | A new applicant is chosen from 100-200 people after an interview. Collective solution helps to choose the best candidate. |
| Huge pedagogical workload of professors. Almost all their time is dedicated to teaching not to researching and science. | Professors read lectures 6-8 hours per week. About 40% of their time is dedicated to science and researching work. |
| A large difference between rector’s and professors’ income. Low salary doesn’t allow inviting good international professors and scientists. University leavers don’t want to do a low-paid work in research institutes. | Oxford is an International University where collected the best professors and scientists from all over the world. They are paid enough money and are provided all conditions that are necessary for comfortable and efficient work. |

# Conclusion

In my opinion by contrast with Great Britain education in Russia has much more problems than opportunities. It doesn’t mean that Russia’s education is worse and Britain’s is better. No. Each country has its own development path that dependent on different aspects and determines the government’s educational policy. By joining the Bologna Process Russia confirmed the necessity of changes in the traditional educational paradigm and a revision of the content of education. I believe that finally educational reforms will give the positive effect.

It’s important to remember the fact that education begins at home. It is parents who must create the environment that values education and support a child’s learning. Seeds of curiosity, hard-working, love of knowledge which parents put into the child can open for him/her lots of opportunities for better life in future.



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